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THE ATTITUDE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS
TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT

By

WINIFRED EMMA HALE

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
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THE ATTITUDE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS
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THE ATTITUDE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT.

Chapter I.

I N T R O D U C T O R Y.

From the time of Hadrian, numerous Christian writings appeared, which have commonly been called Apologies. The term may be restricted to those works which were addressed directly to the Emperor and officials of the Roman government, or it may be made to include also certain pleas which, though addressed to the Greeks and heathen, are supposed by some to have been intended for the Emperor's attention.

The Apologies considered in this thesis are those of
SUBJECT OF the broader class of the Ante-Nicene Period,
THESIS and include those addressed to the Emperor Ha-
DEFINED. drian by Aristides and Quadratus; the Epistle to Diognetus
by an unknown author of about the same time as the preced-
ing; the address of Tatian to the Greeks; the argument of
Theophilus addressed to Autolycus; the first Apology of
Justin Martyr addressed to Antoninus Pius and the Senate;
the second Apology of Justin to the Senate; the fragments
of Melito addressed to Marcus Aurelius; the Embassy of
Athenagoras presented to the Emperors Aurelius and Commo-
das; Tertullian's famous Apology to the rulers of the Ro-
man Empire; the Octavius of Minucius Felix; Origen against

Celsus; the Seven Books against the Heathen of Arnobius; and the Divine Institutes of Lactantius addressed to the Emperor Constantine.

The exact dates of most of these writings are in dispute. Those adopted in the following table
DATES AND LOCATION. are given by Harnack in Die Chronologie or by Brockhaus in Konversations-Lexikon. The table shows the relation of the Apologists to each other and to the rulers of the Empire. It indicates also the part of the Empire represented by each of the writers.

All citations are made from the American Reprint of the Edinburgh Edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

EMPERORS

APOLOGISTS

NAMES	DATES	DATES	NAMES	LOCALITY
Hadrian		¹ 125/26	Quadrates	Athens
	138	¹ 138/61	Aristides	Athens
Antoninus Pius		¹ 152/53	Justin Martyr	(Samaria (Rome, etc.
		¹ 153 +	Tatian - - -	(Assyria (Rome (Antioch
Marcus Aurelius	161	²	Minucius Felix	(Rome (Carthage
		¹ 169/176	Melito - - -	(Sardis (Attica
		¹ 177/180	Athenagoras - -	Athens
Commodus	180	¹ 180/240	Epistle to Diognetus - -	Rome ?
	192	¹ 181/182	Theophilus - -	Antioch
Septimius Severus		² 193/211	Tertullian - -	(Carthage (Rome.
"	211			
"	"			
"	"			
"	"			
"	"			
"	"	² r.185	Origen	

EMPERORS

APOLOGISTS

NAMES	DATES	DATES	NAMES	LOCALITY
Septimius Severus	211	d.254	Origen - - - -	(Alexandria (Rome (Antioch, etc.
Decius	249			
"	251			
"	"			
"	"			
"	"			
"	"			
"	"			
"	284			
Diocletian		d.327 ²	Arnobius - - -	Numidia
"		305		
"		"		
"		"		
Constantine		314? ²	Lactantius - -	(Italy (Nicomedia (Gaul

1. Harnack.
2. Brockhaus.

The Apologists were prompted by different motives, and, according to the ruling purpose, the relation of any particular attitude toward the government varies. When, as in Arnobius, the motive is essentially to win pagans to the Christian faith, the political organization is mentioned only incidentally, or not at all. When, on the contrary, the Apologist desires to gain greater consideration and justice for the Christians, or consciously endeavors to instruct the Emperor, as does Lactantius, the attitude toward the government stands more fully revealed, though it may in some cases be partially hidden through motives of prudence. As a whole, however, the Apologists are fearless men, and the reader is impressed by the vigor with which they speak.

Those Apologies which are addressed to the governing powers recognize, by the simple fact of such superscriptions, the authority of the Roman officials. This is true whether the form is brief, as Tertullian's "Rulers of the Roman Empire," or whether it is more extended, as Justin's address "to the Emperor Titus

1. Superscription of Aristides' Apology in the Syriac, Introduction: "All powerful Caesar Titus Hadrianus Antoninus, venerable and merciful." Throughout Hadrian is addressed by the use of the expression, "O King." Justin's Second Apology (Ch. I) is headed, "Addressed to the Roman Senate," and the Senators are addressed directly as "Romans." Athenagoras makes his Plea to the "Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia, and, more than all, philosophers." (Introduction).

2. Tertullian, Apol., ch. I.

3. Justin Martyr, First Apol., ch. I.

Ælius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar, and to his son Verissimus the Philosopher, and to Lucius the Philosopher, the natural son of Caesar, and the adopted son of Pius, a lover of learning, and to the sacred Senate, with the whole people of the Romans." The tone of all these superscriptions is respectful, and, with the exception of Tertullian's, all are elaborate. It is not probable that the more extended form employed by such a writer as Justin is particularly significant as compared with the simple form used by Tertullian. Throughout, Tertullian speaks with greater abruptness. Justin's use of the simple term "Romans" in addressing the Senate may be due to a wish to use some expression under which all citizens may meet on terms of equality. With all the Apologists, there is evidently a real respect for the Roman authority, or possibly a desire to conciliate by avoiding any intimation of disloyalty.

1

The superscription used by Lactantius seems to imply that he recognizes and appreciates some favorable change in the attitude of the Emperor toward the Christians. His words are, "O mighty Emperor Constantine, who were the first of the Roman princes to repudiate errors and to acknowledge and honour the majesty of the one and only true

2

God." Later Lactantius implies the same thing, when he

1. Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Bk. I, ch. I.
2. Ibid., Bk. VII, ch. XXVI. "But thou, both by the innate sanctity of thy character, and by thy acknowledgment of the truth and of God in every action, dost fully perform the works of righteousness. It was therefore fitting that, in arranging the condition of the human race, the Deity

writes, "By thy acknowledgment of the truth and of God in every action, thou dost fully perform the works of righteousness."

CHAPTER II.

DEMANDS MADE OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The leading motive of the Apologists was to lay before the Emperors certain demands which the Christians desired to make of the government. One of these demands was for a personal investigation of the Christian cause on the part of the Emperor.

1 2 3
Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Melito touch this matter.

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. II and III: "We have come, not to flatter you by this writing nor please you by our address, but to beg you to pass judgment, after an accurate and searching investigation, not flattered by prejudice or by a desire of pleasing superstitious men, nor induced by irrational impulse or evil rumours which have long been prevalent, to give a decision which will prove to be against yourselves.....We demand that the charges against the Christians be investigated, and that, if these be substantiated, they be punished as they deserve."

2. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. I: "We ask that the Emperors bestow some consideration on the Christians also, that they may cease at length to be slaughtered at the investigation of false accusers."

3. Melito, Fragments: "If these proceedings take place at thy bidding, well and good. For a just sovereign will never take unjust measures; and we, on our part, gladly accept the honor of such a death. This request only we present to thee, that thou wouldst first of all examine for thyself into the behavior of these reputed agents of so much strife, and then come to a just decision as to whether they merit death and punishment, or deserve to live in safety and quiet. But if, on the contrary, it shall turn out that this measure, and this new sort of command, which it would be unbecoming to employ even against barbarian foemen, do not proceed from thee, then all the more do we entreat thee not to leave us thus exposed to the spoliation of the populace."

They seem to feel that an impartial investigation on the part of the Emperor would greatly alleviate the sufferings of the Christians. They do not wish to flatter or unduly influence the authorities, but feel that more attention from the head of the government would reveal unjust conditions. They are willing that the Christians should be punished if the charges brought against them by false accusers are proved. Melito especially expresses the feeling that the Christians look upon the Emperor as just and will accept their treatment as an honor in case it is shown that it emanates from him. The absence of this particular demand in the later Apologists may indicate that the Christians felt that the Emperors had paid more attention to their condition.

Such an investigation, in the minds of the earlier Apologists, is necessary for any reasonable degree of justice, and simple justice is all for which they ask. Justin, Tatian, and Athenagoras refer in particular to this demand. They ask to be treated ac-

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. III: "True reason forbids you, for the sake of a wicked rumor, to worry blameless men, and indeed rather yourselves, who think fit to direct affairs, not by judgment but by passion. And every sober-minded person will declare this to be the only fair and equitable adjustment, namely, that the subjects render an unexceptional account of their own life and doctrine; and that, on the other hand, the rulers should give their decision in obedience, not to violence and tyranny, but to piety and philosophy." He then goes on to say that in order that the authorities may not incur a penalty for their blindness, it is the duty of the Christians to so explain themselves that they may not be responsible for that blindness. And he continues, "It is your business, when you hear us, to be found, as reason demands, good judges." Ibid., Ch. LXVIII: "For we forewarn you, that you

cording to reason and law, and endeavor to show that the Emperor wrongs himself as much as he does the Christians. Justin feels a certain responsibility because of the punishment which must fall upon the "unjust judge" and wishes to clear himself of negligence by warning the Emperor.

The appeal for justice involves that for fair trial, which means simply the treatment that others receive when

DEMAND brought before the courts. Fair trial assumes
FOR
FAIR TRIAL the privilege of defence on the part of the Christians and the proof of specific charges aside from that of the avowal of the mere name. As to the laws under which¹ the Christians are condemned Tertullian alone makes a direct plea for revision. He claims that laws against the existence of Christians are tyrannical if they are passed simply because the authorities wish certain results to follow, and not because certain results ought to follow. "It is already

shall not escape the coming judgment of God, if you continue in your injustice.....We have made this appeal and explanation because we know that what we ask is just."

Ibid., Second Apology, Ch. XV: "And would that you also, in a manner becoming piety and philosophy, would for your own sakes judge justly."

2. Tatian, Address to the Greeks, Ch. XXVII: "Is it not unreasonable that ...we are to be assailed with abuse on a judgment formed without examination?"

3. Athenagoras, Plea, Ch. I: The purpose of his Plea is to convince the Emperor that the Christians suffer "unjustly and contrary to all law and reason."

Ibid., Ch. III: "For our treatment does not comport with your justice."

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. IV.

determined that whatever is beneficial is legitimate. Well, if I have found that your law prohibits to be good, as one who has arrived at such a previous opinion, has it not lost its power to debar me from it, though that very thing, if it were evil, it would justly forbid to me? If your law has gone wrong, it is of human origin, I think." He speaks of the many Roman laws which need amendment simply because they are not just. "For it is neither the number of their years nor the dignity of their maker that commends them." He makes the claim that it is not enough that a "law is just, nor that the judge should be convinced of its justice; those from whom obedience is expected should have that conviction, too. Nay, a law lies under strong suspicion which does not care to have itself tried and approved; it is positively wicked law, if, ¹ unproved, it tyrannizes over men." Later he mentions many of the laws of the Romans which they themselves have put aside. ² Origen more directly makes a charge of injustice against the Roman law.

With the exception of the demand for a revision of the laws under which the Christians are convicted, what

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. VI.

2. Origen against Celsus, Bk. I, Ch. 1: "It is not irrational, then, to form associations in opposition to existing laws, if done for the sake of truth."

seems to be asked for is the execution of the laws as they stand.

Strong statements are made of the complaint regarding¹ condemnation for the name alone. Justin claims that the mere name can mean nothing good or evil and that a representative of the Roman religion is never punished before conviction, but that the "shadow of a Christian's name is snatched at as a substantial crime." He states that when a Christian retracts, he is released as though guilty of no crime, but that when he adheres to the name he is counted guilty, when in both cases, the lives should be examined in order to test their merits. "But the scales of justice are not held even, and the authorities take care that the Christians shall suffer, being driven on

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. VII: "Wherefore we demand that the deeds of all those who are accused to you be judged, in order that each one who is convicted may be punished as an evil-doer, and not as a Christian, and if it is clear that any one is blameless, that he may be acquitted, since by the mere fact of his being a Christian he does no wrong." He adds, with reference to Hadrian's Rescript, that he does not ask that the accusers be punished, for "they are sufficiently punished by their present wickedness and ignorance of what is right.

Ibid., Ch. VIII. He remarks that a regular trial is for the best interests of the authorities, for it is within the power of the Christians to deny, when examined, that they are Christians, though he adds, "But we would not live by telling a lie."

Ibid., Ch. IV: "Again, if any of the accused deny the name, and say that he is not a Christian, you acquit him as having no evidence against him as a wrong-doer; but if anyone acknowledges that he is a Christian, you punish him on account of this acknowledgment. Justice requires that you inquire into the life both of him who confesses and of him who denies, that by his deeds it may be apparent what kind of man he is."

by headstrong passions and evil demons." Again, Justin seems to be considering the best interests of the authorities, for he states that the Christians could escape by prevarication, though he expresses the utmost scorn for one who would purchase life at the expense of a lie. However, he does not wish the accusers punished, for he feels that their ignorance and wickedness is a sufficient penalty.¹ Tatian thinks that the treatment of the Christians is very unjust, as compared with that of a robber, who is never condemned for the name he bears.

²
Tertullian approaches the question of trials from a more distinctly legal standpoint. He appeals to the law that no man shall be condemned unheard and shows that this law is observed in all other cases where men are accused of the same charges which are urged against Christians, but that in the case of the latter, it is not thought necessary to prove the charges. It is enough with them if they confess the name, while, with others, even a confession is examined before sentence is passed. He enlarges sarcastically upon the glory which would accrue to some ruler who

1. Tatian, Address to the Greeks, Ch. XXVII: "It is not unreasonable that, while the robber is not to be punished for the name he bears, but only when the truth about him has been clearly ascertained, yet we are to be assailed with abuse on a judgment formed without examination?"

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. II.

might prove the charges constantly brought against the Christians. Trajan's letter to Pliny is interpreted as meaning that the innocence of the Christians is implied when search for them is forbidden, while, inconsistently, they are considered guilty as soon as, by chance, they are brought before the bar of justice. The fact is next shown that the judicial procedure against Christians differs altogether from that in other cases. Whereas torture is applied to the ordinary criminal to make him confess his crime, it is used with the Christian to make him deny his faith. The lack of insight here is proved by the fact that the Christian, if really guilty of a crime, would deny it any way without torture. Others are forced to recount even the circumstances of their crimes, while, in dealing with Christians, the authorities are satisfied, by a confession of the name, that all other imputed crimes are involved. Tertullian sees the inconsistency of the procedure by which the Christian, if forced to deny his faith, thereby denies the crimes supposed to be insepara-

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. II: "Why dost thou play a game of evasion upon thyself, O Judgment? If thou condemnest, why dost thou not also inquire? If thou dost not inquire, why dost thou not also absolve? Military stations are distributed through all the provinces for tracking robbers. Against traitors and public foes, every man is a soldier; search is made even for their confederates and accessories. The Christian alone must not be sought, though he may be brought and accused before the judge as if a search had any other end than that in view! And so you condemn the man for whom nobody wished a search to be made when he is presented to you, and who even now does not deserve punishment. I suppose, because of his guilt, but because, though forbidden to be sought, he was found."

bly attached to that faith. An illustration of his sarcasm may be introduced here. "I suppose, though you believe us to be the worst of mankind, you do not wish us to perish. For thus, no doubt, you are in the habit of bidding the murderer deny, and of ordering the man guilty of sacrilege to the rack if he persevere in his acknowledgment! Is that the way of it?"

Tertullian charges that the failure to search out Christians must be in violation of law, for the law demands the apprehension of criminals. He says, too, that those who own a crime are to be condemned and not acquitted. From the above discussion, he argues that the difference in dealing with Christians and other offenders, indicates that, in the case of the Christians, no crime is involved, but that they are persecuted for the name alone.

¹
He pauses over the name "Christian," and shows the universal dislike in which it is held, and the unreasonableness of the dislike for a mere name, which in itself suggests nothing worse than "anointing," and even when wrongly pronounced suggests "sweetness" and "benignity."
²
Justin had said before practically the same thing, and the

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. III.

2. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. IV.

1
Second Apology is drawn out by an incident in Rome which illustrates forcibly the summary method of trial against which the Apologists protest. 2
Athenagoras in the time of Marcus Aurelius makes a similar complaint and the same argument against conviction for the name which in itself carries no offence. After the time of Tertullian, the Apologists do not refer to this topic, which occupies

1. Justin Martyr, Second Apol., Ch. II: Ptolemaeus had been the teacher of a woman, who, after becoming a Christian, sought a legal separation from her dissolute pagan husband who brought action against the teacher because of the latter's influence in converting the wife. The perfect, Urbicus, in trying the case, examined Ptolemaeus on the single point, as to whether he were a Christian. Upon his confession, he was ordered away to punishment, as were also two others who stood by and protested at the injustice.

2. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. I: "But why is a mere name odious to you? Names are not deserving of hatred; it is the unjust act that calls for penalty and punishment. And, accordingly, with admiration of your mildness and gentleness and your peaceful and benevolent disposition toward every man, individuals live in the possession of equal rights, and the cities, according to their rank, share in equal honor; and the whole empire, under your intelligent sway, enjoys profound peace. But for us who are called Christians, you have not in like manner cared, and, although we commit no wrong- nay, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse, are of all men most piously and righteously disposed toward the Deity and toward your government - you allow us to be harassed, plundered, and persecuted, the multitude making war upon us for the name alone."

Ibid., Ch. II. "But if the accusation relates only to our names- and it is undeniable, that, up to the present time, the stories told about us rest on nothing better than the common indiscriminating popular talk, nor has any Christian been convicted of crime, it will devolve on you, illustrious and benevolent and most learned sovereigns, to remove by law this spiteful treatment, so that as, throughout the world both individuals and cities partake of your beneficence, we also may feel grateful to you, exulting that we are no longer the victims of false accusations."

such a prominent place in the writings of the early defenders of the faith. This silence suggests the supposition that the name alone was not made the basis of accusation in the third century. The later writers, too, with the exception of Lactanius, are more concerned with the evidences of the faith than they are with the defence of the Christians from unjust punishment at the hands of the authorities.

1

The plea is made by Justin that the treatment of the Christians is unjust because other sects, though teaching
DEMAND FOR evil, "are neither persecuted nor put to death,
FREEDOM OF at least on account of their opinions."
WORSHIP

2

Toward the close of his Apology, Tertullian introduces a similar request when he asks for the same consideration which the philosophers receive. He claims that the latter teach much of what constitutes Christian doctrine; that they overthrow the gods, and yet they are applauded; that the Christians are superior to the philosophers in all the virtues, and yet are not allowed the same freedom.

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. XXVI.

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XLVI: "So, then, where is there any likeness between the Christian and the philosopher? between the disciple of Greece and of heaven? between the man whose object is fame, and whose object is life? between the talker and the doer? between the man who builds up and the man who pulls down? between the friend and the foe of error? between one who corrupts the truth, and one who restores and teaches it? between its chief and its custodian?"

1

Tertullian makes an appeal for freedom of worship,
also. He asserts that religion in its nature demands
DEMAND FOR liberty and that all the Roman provinces have
FREEDOM OF their own gods, but that the Christians alone
WORSHIP are prevented from having a religion of their own in peace.

After disposing of the charges against the Christians,

2

Tertullian asks, "Ought not Christians, therefore, to re-
DEMAND FOR ceive not merely somewhat milder treatment,
LIBERTY OF but to have a place among the law-tolerated
ASSEMBLY societies?" From this it appears that the Christians were
looked upon as illegally organized and that they considered
this unjust. 3
Tertullian makes a special plea for the
right of assembly, urging that the Christian congregation
is no more harmful than the individual. "Who has ever
suffered harm from our assemblies? We are in our congregations just what we are as individuals; we injure nobody, we trouble nobody. When the upright, when the virtuous meet together; when the pious, when the pure assemble in-

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXIV. "We give offence to the Romans because we do not worship the gods of Rome. It is well that there is a God of all, whose we all are whether we will or no. But with you, liberty is given to worship any god but the true God, as though he were not rather the God all should worship to whom all belong." "For see that you do not give a further ground for the charge of irreligion, by taking away religious liberty, and forbidding free choice of deity, so that I may no longer worship according to my inclination, but am compelled to worship against it. Not even a human being would care to have unwilling homage rendered him." See also Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXVIII.

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXXVIII.

3. Ibid., Ch. XXXIX.

congregation, you ought not to call that a faction, but a curia, (i.e., the court of God.)"

CHAPTER III.

REFUTATION OF CHARGES BROUGHT AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS.

In making these demands upon the government for investigation, justice, fair trial, treatment like that accorded to other classes, and right of organization as a law-tolerated society, it became necessary that the Apologists should refute the charges which were constantly brought against the Christians.

One of the charges inseparably connected with the name Christian in the early centuries is that of atheism.

¹
ATHEISM Justin Martyr admits the force of this accusation

in regard to the gods of the Romans, but not when the deity considered is "the most true God, the Father of righteousness and temperance and the other virtues who is free from all impurity." He ²does not fear to portray the folly of the worship of images. Athenagoras devotes himself almost exclusively to proving the falsity of the charges advanced against the Christians. His discussion of

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. V.

2. Ibid., Ch. IX: "What infatuation! that dissolute men should be said to fashion and make gods for your worship and that you should appoint such men the guardians of the temples where they are enshrined; not recognizing that it is unlawful even to think or say that men are the guardians of gods."

atheism is extended and philosophical. The argument is¹ that those who believe in a God the Creator as distinguished from matter, the created, can not be guilty of atheistic tendencies, and that certain teachings of the philosophers might better be so designated than those of the Christians. He proceeds to draw from the Roman writers testimony as to the unity of God and claims that the Christian beliefs are superior to those of the poets and philosophers because they rest on the authority of the "Spirit of God who moved the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments." He argues against polytheism; maintains the belief in the Father, Son (Logos), and Holy Spirit as still a belief in the unity of God; and deduces from the fact of the moral lives of the Christians their belief in God.

Closely related to the question of atheism is that regarding the outward conduct which led to the charge of

SACRILEGE disbelief in deity; namely, that of the refusal of the Christians to sacrifice to the gods
and to observe pagan religious ceremonials. Justin speaks²

1. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. IV-XII: "But to us, who distinguish God from matter, and teach that matter is one thing and God another, and that they are separated by a wide interval (for the Deity is uncreated and eternal, to be beheld by the understanding and reason alone, while matter is created and perishable), is it not absurd to apply the name of atheism?But since our doctrine acknowledges one God, the Maker of the Universe, who is Himself uncreated (for that which is does not come to be, but that which is not) but has made all things by the Logos which is from Him, we are treated unreasonably in both respects, in that we are both defamed and persecuted."

2. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. XXIV.

of the sole accusation which is brought against his fellows, viz., "that we do not reverence the same gods as you do, nor offer to the dead libations and the savour of fat, and crowns for their statues, and sacrifices." He argues that the "same animals are with some esteemed gods, with others wild beasts, and with others sacrificial victims."

¹
We have from Athenagoras a powerful defence against the charge of sacrilege. "The Framer and father of the universe does not need blood, nor the odour of burnt offerings, nor the fragrance of flowers and incense, inasmuch as He is Himself perfect fragrance, needing nothing either within or without; but the noblest sacrifice is for us to know who stretched out and vaulted the Heavens, and fixed the earth in its place like a center, who gathered the water into seas and divided the light from the darkness, who adorned the sky with stars and made the earth to bring forth seed of every kind, who made animals and fashioned man."
²
He continues the defence by a discussion of the nature of the pagan gods.

³
Tertullian also speaks of sacrilege and treason as the sole grounds of accusation against the Christian. His reply to the charge of sacrilege is very simple: "We do not worship your gods because there are no such beings."
⁴
He shows that the gods are mortal, and thinks that, as to images, the Christians should receive credit because they

1. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. XIII.

2. Ibid., Ch. XVIII-XXIV.

3. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. X.

have discovered the error of their worship.¹ He then treats of the inconsistency of the Romans themselves in their worship² and shows how they bring dishonor to their gods,³ and comes to the conclusion that the gods have more reason to complain of the Romans than of the Christians.⁴ He examines into the claims of Christianity, and finally boldly declares that the Roman gods are nonentities, and so there can be no treason against them.⁵ This is followed by the fearless declaration: "When we are called therefore to sacrifice we resolutely refuse, relying on the knowledge we possess, by which we are well assured of the real objects to whom these services are offered, under profaning of images and the deification of human names."⁶ Origen has the same question to deal with in his day. He

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XII. "In a word, if we refuse our homage to statues and frigid images, the very counterpart of their dead originals, with which hawks and mice and spiders are so well acquainted, does it not merit praise instead of penalty, that we have rejected what we have come to see is error? We cannot surely be made out to injure those who, we are sure, are nonentities. What does not exist, is in its non-existence secure from suffering."

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XIII.

3. Ibid., Ch. XIV, XV.

4. Ibid., Ch. XV-XXI.

5. Ibid., Ch. XXVII: "Enough has been said in these remarks to confute the charge of treason against your religion; for we cannot be held to do harm to that which has no existence."

6. Origen against Celsus, Bk. VIII, Ch. XXI, XXIV, and XXV. "If, however, the so-called public festivals can in no way be shown to accord with the service of God, but may, on the contrary, be proved to have been devised by men when occasion offered to commemorate some human events, or to set forth certain qualities of earth or water, or the fruits of the earth,- in that case it is clear that those who wish to offer an enlightened worship to the Divine Being will act according to sound reason, and not take part in the public feasts... That man truly celebrates a feast who does

looks upon the feast-days as of human origin, and thinks that an enlightened worship of God demands prayer and the performance of duty rather than the celebration of the feasts.

The charge of sacrilege seems to have been raised throughout the entire Ante-Nicene Period, for Arnobius, too, ¹ refers to it. He defends the Christians through a criticism of the way the gods are dishonored by the people themselves, and asserts that language is used regarding the gods which would not be allowed regarding living men. "And yet you do not blush to raise against us the charge of want of regard for deities so infamous, although it is much better to disbelieve the existence of the gods than to think they are such and of such repute."

The refusal of worship to the Emperor is so closely related to the idea of sacrilege that it is difficult to

TREASON AGAINST THE EMPEROR	separate the two. The Christians recognize that such refusal is regarded as a crime against the majesty of the Emperor. Most of the Apologists refer to the matter, protesting their loyalty, while upholding the attitude of the Christians. The first direct statement of the thought of the Christians regarding the Emperor is made by Theophilus, ² and the sentiment is that of the other Apologists. "Wherefore, I will his duty and prays always, offering up continually blood sacrifices in prayer to God."
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1. Arnobius, Seven Books against the Heathen, Bk. IV, Ch.

2. Theophilus to Autolycus, Bk. I, Ch. XI.

rather honor the king (than your gods), not, indeed, worshipping him, but praying for him. But God, the living and the true God, I worship, knowing that the king is made by Him. You will say, then, to me, 'Why do you not worship the King?' Because he is not made to be worshipped, but to be revered with lawful honor, for he is not a god, but a man appointed by God, not to be worshipped but to judge justly. For in a kind of way, his government is committed to him by God; as he will not have those called kings whom he has appointed under himself, for 'king' is his title and it is not lawful for another to use it; so neither is it lawful for any to be worshipped but God only. Wherefore, O man, you are wholly in error. Accordingly, honour the king, be subject to him, and pray for him with loyal mind; for if you do this, you do the will of God. For the law that is of God says, 'My son, fear thou the lord and the king, and be not disobedient to them; for suddenly they shall take vengeance on their enemies.' "

1

Justin Martyr makes a protestation of loyalty when explaining the often misunderstood statement that the Christians were looking for a kingdom. He explains that this kingdom is not of an earthly nature, and his proof of the statement is the confession of faith made by the Christians even when they know that death awaits such a confes-

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. XI, "But since our thoughts are not fixed on the present, we are not concerned when men cut us off; since also death is a debt which must at all events be paid."

sion , for, he says, that if an earthly kingdom were their desire they would avoid death. Later,¹ incidentally, he makes reference to the deification of the Emperors, but simply in proving that no more is believed by the Christians of Christ than by the Romans of their deified beings.

²
Tertullian approaches boldly the charge of treason against the imperial majesty. He seems to think this a more serious charge than that of sacrilege or treason to religion, because, as he says, the Romans themselves look upon the majesty of a living man as more august than that of a dead one.³ He proceeds to show how the gods themselves and their images are in the power of the Caesar, and thus cannot possibly protect him who is their guardian. Even the materials of which the images are made come from Caesar's mines, and many of the gods have felt Caesar's displeasure. And so the claim is made that the reason the Christians are suspected of treason against the imperial majesty is simply that they "do not put the emperors under their own possession, that they do not offer a mere mock sacrifice on their behalf, as not believing their safety rests in leaden hands.....But you are impious in a high degree who look for it where it is not, who seek it from

1. Justin Martyr, First Apology, Ch. XXI.

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXVIII.

3. Ibid., Ch. XXIX.

those who have it not to give, passing by Him who has it entirely in His power. Besides this, you persecute those who know where to seek for it, and who, knowing where to seek for it, are able as well to secure it."

1

Several of the Apologists emphasize the loyalty of the Christians which leads them to pray for the Emperor. "For we offer prayer for the safety of our princes to the eternal, the true, the living God, whose favor beyond all others, they must themselves desire." ² Tertullian elaborates upon the reverence and respect of the Christians and claims that they look up to the Emperor as called by the Lord to his office. He thinks that the Christians are really the most loyal subjects of the king, because they look upon him as subordinate to God and thus give him the place which it is to his interest to occupy. Any other thought of the king would be, to Tertullian, a falsehood or an attempt at ridicule. He suggests that the king himself could not desire the high name of Deity, and pro-

1. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXX, Ch. XXXIX; Theophilus, Bk. I, Ch. XI; Athenagoras, Ch. XXXII, Ch. XXXVII.

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXX.

3. Ibid., Ch. XXX-XXXII: "But, in keeping the majesty of Caesar within due limits, and putting it under the most High, and making it less than divine, I commend him the more to the favour of the Deity, to whom I make him alone inferior. But I place him in subjection to one I regard as more glorious than himself. Never will I call the Emperor God, and that either because it is not in me to be guilty of falsehood; or that I dare not turn him into ridicule; or that not even himself will desire to have that high name applied to him. If he is but a man, it is in his interest as man to give God His higher place. Let him think it enough to bear the name of Emperor. That, too, is a great name of God's giving. To call him God, is to rob him of his title."

tests, "Never will I call the Emperor God." The term Lord he is willing to use in what he considers the proper sense, though he prefers the term Father as indicating "piety" rather than power. The reverence for the Emperor as a deity may bring upon him a curse.

As a further point, Tertullian shows how Romans themselves have proved traitors even after having recently sacrificed to the genius of the Emperor. What constitutes true loyalty is defined, and one of the clearest expressions of democracy of feeling is given. ³ "If it is a fact

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXXIV. "Augustus, the founder of the empire, would not even have the title Lord; for that, too, is a name of Deity. For my part, I am willing to give the Emperor this designation; but in the common acceptation of the word, and when I am not forced to call him Lord as in God's place. But my relation to him is one of freedom; for I have but one true Lord, the God omnipotent and eternal, who is Lord of the Emperor as well. How can he, who is truly father of his country, be its lord? The name of piety is more grateful than the name of power; so the heads of families are called fathers rather than lords. Far less should the Emperor have the name of God. We can only profess our belief that he is that by the most unworthy, nay, a fatal flattery; it is just as if, having an Emperor, you call another by the name, in which case will you not give great and unappeasable offence to him who actually reigns? an offence he, too, needs to fear on whom you have bestowed the title. Give all reverence to God, if you wish him to be propitious to the Emperor. Give up all worship of, and belief in, any other being as divine. Cease also to give the sacred name to him who has need of God himself. If such adulation is not ashamed of its lie, in addressing a man as divine, let it have some dread at least of the evil omen which it bears. It is the invocation of a curse, to give Caesar the name of God before his apotheosis."

2. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXXV.

3. Ibid., Ch. XXXVI.

that men bearing the name of Romans are found to be enemies of Rome, why are we, on the ground that we are regarded as enemies, denied the name of Romans? We may be at once Romans and foes of Rome, when men passing for Romans are discovered to be enemies of their country. So the affection, and fealty, and reverence, due to the Emperors, do not consist on such tokens of homage as these, which even hostility may be zealous in performing, chiefly as a cloak to its purposes; but in those ways which Deity as certainly enjoins on us, as they are held to be necessary in the case of all men as well as Emperors. Deeds of true heart goodness are not due to Emperors alone. We never do good with respect of persons; for in our own interest we conduct ourselves as those who take no payment either of praise or premium from man, but from God, who both requires and remunerates an impartial benevolence. We are the same to Emperors as to our ordinary neighbors. For we are equally forbidden to wish ill, to speak ill, to think ill of all men. The thing we must not do to an Emperor, we must not do to anyone else; what we would not do to anyone, a fortiori, perhaps we should not do to him whom God has been pleased so highly to exalt."

There are further expressions, which, while not used directly to refute the charge of treason against the Emperor, indicate the feeling of the Christians toward him.

¹
Several times the statement is repeated that the Christians
1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XVII; Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. XVI; Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Bk. II, Ch. V.

feel bound to worship God alone, thus implying that the Emperor is not to receive worship from them.

Referring to the deification of the Emperors, Tertul-
1
lian sarcastically remarks that the gods must consider it an honor, when those who have been their masters, are made
2
only their equals. He expresses himself, in regard to oath-taking, as considering an oath by the safety or life of the Emperor far more valuable than one by the genius. His argument is that, because the king has been raised to authority by the ordinance of God, his safety must be valuable to the Deity, and thus an oath involving the safety of the Emperor is a strong oath. But the daemons (or genii) the Christians exorcise instead of rendering them divine by swearing by them.

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XIII. "The gods will count themselves indebted to you; nay, it will be a matter of high rejoicing among them that their masters are made their equals."

2. Ibid., Ch. XXXII. "Tho we decline to swear by the genii of the Caesars, we swear by their safety, which is worth far more than all your genii. Are you ignorant that these genii are called "Daemones" and thence the diminutive name "Daemonia" is applied to them? We respect in the Emperors the ordinance of God, who has set them over the nations. We know that there is that in them which God has willed; and to what God has willed, we desire all safety, and we count an oath by it a great oath. But as for daemons, that is, your genii, we have been in the habit of exorcising them, not of swearing by them, and thereby conferring on them divine honour."

It is evident from what Tertullian says that the Christians were blamed for not observing the Emperor's holidays as was thought fitting. In a scathing denunciation of the usual holiday conduct, he points out that his brethren are far more loyal to the Emperor than are those who seek to condemn them.

Minucius Felix looks upon kings as consecrated not because of their divinity but because of their power, and he asserts that the name of divinity is not always willingly borne. He suggests that honor and love might be more fittingly and pleasantly rendered than worship, to a great man. Here, as in Tertullian, the words "genius" and "demon" are used interchangeably.

Arnobius speaks in quite unrestrained terms regarding the deification of tyrants and kings who are guilty of many crimes.

Thus it is seen that through the entire period of the Ante-Nicene Apologists, protests of loyalty to the Emperor are made, while at the same time worship is absolutely re-

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXXV.

2. Minucius Felix, Octavius, Ch. XXIII. "Kings are divine who are consecrated, not in the faith of their divinity, but in honor of the power that they exercise. Moreover, this name is ascribed to those who are unwilling to bear it." "A false flattery disgracefully caresses princes and kings, not as great and chosen men, as is just, but as gods; whereas honor is more truly rendered to an illustrious man, and love is more pleasantly given to a very good man. Thus they invoke their deity, they supplicate their images, they implore their Genius, that is, their demon; and it is safer to swear falsely by the genius of Jupiter than by that of the king."

3. Arnobius, Seven Books, Bk. I, Ch. 64.

fused to him and no apparent hesitation is felt regarding criticism of his life.

A charge closely related to the foregoing is the one of rebellion made by Celsus and answered by Origen. Ori-
¹

REBELLION gen claims that neither "Celsus nor they who think with him are able to point out any act on the part of the Christians which savours of rebellion."

He refers to the fact that the "Christian law-giver" had not thought it right to offer violence to enemies, however wicked, and asserts that, had rebellion been the Christians' desire, they would have adopted less mild regulations and would not have gone as sheep to the slaughter.

²
Celsus looks upon rebellion as a sufficient reason for the union of the Christians, but Origen replies that the Christians' unity depends on their common faith in Christ.

Nearly all the Apologists assume that the persecutions for the name alone are based upon the assumption that certain evil practices are inseparably connected with the name. These charges of the eating of childrens' flesh and of incest are met by many arguments.

IMMORALITY

³
Justin Martyr suggests that these monstrous deeds may have been laid to the account of the Christians because of

1. Origen against Celsus, Bk. II, Ch. VII-VIII.

2. Ibid., Bk. III, Ch. XV.

3. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. XXVI. He suggests that some of the followers of Simon Magus and of Marcion may be guilty of the shameful deeds charged to the Christians, but he does not know.

their confusion with other sects in the minds of the per-¹
secutors. He brings counter-charges against the Romans,
and proves the virtues of the Christians by citing illus-²
trations of continence.

Athenagoras treats the matter at great length. His³
introductory chapter is particularly strong. "But if these
charges are true, spare no class; destroy us root and
branch with our wives and children, if any Christian is
found to live like the brutes..... If anyone, therefore,
is more savage than the brutes, what punishment that he
can endure shall be deemed adequate to such offences? But
if these things are only idle tales and empty slanders
originating in the fact that virtue is opposed by its very
nature to vice, and that contraries war against one another
by a divine law, it remains for you to make inquiry
concerning our life, our opinions, our loyalty and obedi-
ence to you and your house and government, and thus at
length to grant to us the same rights (we ask nothing
more) as to those who persecute us." In the same connec-⁴
tion the assertion is made, "You are yourselves witnesses
that no such iniquities are committed by us, for you for-
bid information to be laid against us." When the specific⁵
charges are taken up, reference is made again to the fact

1. Justin Martyr, First Apol. Ch. XXVII.
2. Ibid., Ch. XXIX.
3. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. III.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., Ch. XXXI.

that vice always makes war upon virtue; emphasis is laid¹
upon the high general morality of the Christians; upon²
their chastity; upon the contrast presented by the moral-³
ity of the Christians and of their accusers; upon their⁴
condemnation of all cruelty; and upon the influence which
a belief in the resurrection has in restraining from all⁵
wickedness.

⁶
Tertullian meets these charges with all the power of
his sarcasm. Righteous indignation burns in his words,
"Truth and the hatred of truth come into our world togeth-
er." The absence of all proof is a strong point in Ter-
tullian's argument. He shows how false witness might be
offered by the Jews from a spirit of rivalry; by the sol-
diers from a desire to extort money; and by domestics from
their very nature. He asks when any one has found evi-
dence of these crimes, and who has been bribed into si-
lence. Since no evidence from outside can be given, he
asks if the supposed guilty parties themselves have con-
fessed. The evidence must come from strangers, but how
have they obtained their information? The appeal to the⁷
effects of conscience is especially strong. The preva-

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1. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. XXXII.
 2. Ibid., Ch. XXXIII.
 3. Ibid., Ch. XXXIV.
 4. Ibid., Ch. XXXV.
 5. Ibid., Ch. XXXVI.
 6. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. VII.
 7. Ibid., Ch. VIII.

lence among the Romans of some of the crimes charged against the Christians is pointed out as sufficient reason why such assumptions regarding the Christians could originate.¹

²
Minucius Felix uses the same arguments of lack of proof and the indulgence by the persecutors in the crimes alleged against the Christians. He suggests also that demons have originated the charges and hence they must be false.

Various other complaints against the Christians are mentioned by the different Apologists. One of these is MINOR CHARGES. that the Christians were often held responsible for the occurrence of disasters.³ The cause of disaster. argument is that many calamities befell the world before the coming of Christ, and that through his influence the number of such calamities has been somewhat lessened because virtue has put restraint upon wickedness. The Christians themselves by prayer and fasting "touch God's heart - and when they have extorted divine compassion, why, Jupiter gets all the honour!" The Romans themselves are charged with being the cause of disasters because they despise the true God.

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1. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. IX.
 2. Minucius Felix, Octavius, Ch. XXVIII.
 3. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXXIX.

Pliny's charge of obstinacy is mentioned only by Tertullian.¹ He shows how the same recklessness and desper-

2. Obstinacy. ation has been counted worthy of honor by the Romans when exhibited by those of their own number.

Besides the demand made by Tertullian and cited above (p. 18) that the Christians be given a place among law-

3. Secret Associations. tolerated societies, certain other statements are made by the Apologists regarding² this troublesome question. Justin Martyr

may intend to defend the Christians from the suspicion of holding illegal meetings when he so fully described their ceremonies and assemblies. He tells of the weekly meetings, and makes the claim that if "these things seem unreasonable and true, they should be honored; and if nonsensical, they should be treated as nonsense and not made made matters worthy of the death penalty."

³
Tertullian, too, makes some clear statements about the nature of the Christian organization, with the express

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. L. "Many of your writers exhort to the courageous bearing of pain and death;...and yet their words do not find so many disciples as Christians do, teachers not by words but by their deeds. That very obstinacy you rail against is the preceptress. For who that contemplates it, is not excited to inquire what is at the bottom of it? who, after inquiry, does not embrace our doctrines? and when he has embraced them, desires not that he may suffer that he may become partaker of the fullness of God's grace, that he may obtain from God complete forgiveness, by giving in exchange his blood?"

2. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. LXV-LXVII.

3. Tertullian, Apology, Ch. XXXVII.

purpose of showing why the Christians should not be looked upon as an illicit association. The interpretation of the reason why certain organized bodies are not allowed is that "it is based on a prudential regard to public order, that the state may not be divided into parties."

After describing the assemblies, he makes this plea,-

"Give the congregation of the Christians its due, and hold it unlawful, if it is like assemblies of the illicit sort; by all means let it be condemned, if any complaint can be validly made against it, such as lies against secret factions. But who has ever suffered harm from our assemblies?"

A marked change of sentiment is to be noted in Origen's works fifty years later, when he answers the charge preferred by Celsus that the Christians maintain secret associations. He does not imply that the Christians endeavor to harmonize their conduct with law, as does Pliny's letter a century before, or as does Tertullian. Instead, he admits the formation of illegal associations and defends

1. Origen against Celsus, Bk. I, Ch. 1. "If a man were placed among Scythians, whose laws were unholy, and having no opportunity of escape, were compelled to live among them, such an one would have good reason, for the sake of truth, which the Scythians would regard as wickedness, to enter into associations contrary to their laws, with those like-minded with himself...It is not irrational, then, to form associations in opposition to existing laws, if done for the sake of truth. For as those persons would do well who should enter into a secret association in order to put to death a tyrant who had seized upon the liberties of a state, so Christians also, when tyrannized over by him who is called the devil, and by falsehood form leagues contrary to the laws of the devil, against his power, and for the safety of those others whom they may succeed in persuading to re-

them because formed for the sake of truth. He claims¹ that, except for secrecy, the Christians would have been unable to have risen above the dangers surrounding them and the conspiracies formed against them. Later² Celsus says that "the Christians shrink from raising altars, statues, and temples, and that this is agreed among them as the badge or distinctive mark of a secret and forbidden society." Origen's reply is noteworthy: "Celsus does not perceive that we may regard the spirit of every good man as an altar from which arises an incense which is truly and spiritually sweet-smelling, namely, the prayers ascending from a clear conscience."...."There are some who form images of the Most High in a better manner and with a more perfect skill; but by far the most excellent of all those throughout the whole creation is that image in our Savior, who said, 'My Father is in Me.'.... . Our bodies are the

from a government which is, as it were, 'Scythian' and despotic."

1. Origen against Celsus, Bk. I, Ch. III. Celsus has said that the Christians teach and preach in secret, and that they do this to some purpose, seeing they escape the penalty of death which is immanent; he compares their dangers with those encountered by such men as Socrates for the sake of philosophy. Origen's answer is that in the case of Socrates, the Athenians immediately thereafter repented; and no feeling of bitterness remained in their minds regarding him; but in the case of the Christians, the Roman Senate, the princes of the time, the soldiery, the people, and the relatives of those who had become converts to the faith, made war upon their doctrine, and would have prevented its progress, overcoming it by a confederacy of so powerful a nature, had it not, by the help of God, escaped the danger, and risen above it, so as (finally) to defeat the whole world in its conspiracy against it."

2. Ibid., Bk. VIII, Ch. XVII-XX.

temple of God, and if any one by lust or sin defiles the temple of God, he will himself be destroyed, as acting impiously toward the true temple..... Is it not therefore true that we object to building altars, statues, and temples, because we have agreed to make this the badge of a secret and forbidden society; but we do so because we have learned from Jesus Christ the true way of serving God, and we shrink from whatever, under a pretence of piety, leads to utter impiety those who abandon the way marked out for us by Jesus Christ."

The charge of uselessness preferred against the Christians is answered by Tertullian in a way suggestive as re-

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XLII. "How in all the world can that be the case with people who are living among you, eating the same food, wearing the same attire, having the same habits, under the same necessities of existence? We are not Indian Brahmins or Gymnosophists, who dwell in woods and exile themselves from ordinary human life. We do not forget the debt of gratitude we owe to God, our Lord and Creator; we reject no creation of His hands; though certainly we exercise restraint upon ourselves, lest of any gift of His we make an immoderate or sinful use. So we sojourn with you in the world, abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor bath, nor booth, nor workshop, nor inn, nor weakly market, nor any other place of commerce. We sail with you and fight with you, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in your traffickings - even in the various arts we make public property of our works for your benefit. How is it that we seem useless in your ordinary business, living with you and by you as we do, I am not able to understand."....."Of your resources I partake, wherever I may chance to eat."..."We certainly buy no frankincense. If the Arabians complain of this, let the Sabaeans be well assured that their more precious and costly merchandise is expended as largely in the buying of the Christians as in the fumigating of the gods. At any rate, you say, the temple revenues are every day falling off; how few now throw in a contribution! In truth, we are not able to give alms both to your human and your heavenly mendi-

revealing much, incidentally, of the attitude of the Christians toward Roman institutions. He represents them as entering into all the activities of the daily life and as bearing their part in the economic world. Testimony to much the same condition of affairs was rendered seventy years before Tertullian by the unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetus.¹

"For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity."

cants, nor do we think we are required to give any but to those that seek for it. Let Jupiter then hold out his hand and get, for our compassion spends more in the streets than yours does in the temples. But your other taxes will acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Christians; for, in the faithfulness which keeps us from fraud upon a brother, we make conscience of paying all their dues; so that, by ascertaining how much is lost in fraud and falsehood in the census declarations - the calculation may easily be made - it would be seen that the ground of complaint in one department of revenue is compensated by the advantage which others derive."

1. Epistle to Diognetus, Ch. V. The Epistle says, further, "But inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined...they dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers....They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time, surpass the laws by their lives....."

CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE CHRISTIANS.

Aside from a direct attempt to refute definite charges, the Apologists, in the course of their arguments, mention a number of points evidently intended to bring about a more liberal attitude toward the Christians.

The expressions regarding civil duties are of interest. The author of the Epistle to Diognetus states that, as citizens, the Christians share in all things with others.¹ As to the paying of taxes, we have the following statement:² "And everywhere we, more readily than all men, endeavor to pay to those appointed by you the taxes, both ordinary and extraordinary, as we have been taught by Him; for at that time some came to Him and asked Him, if one ought to pay tribute to Caesar; and He answered, 'Tell me, whose image does the coin bear?' And they said, 'Caesar's.' And again, He answered them, 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.' Whence to God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men, and praying that with your kingly power, you be found to possess also sound judgment."³ Tertullian compares the truthfulness with

1. Epistle to Diognetus, Ch. V.

2. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. XVII.

3. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XLII.

which the Christians make their census declarations with the fraud practiced by others.

As to the holding of office, we might conclude from¹ the general statements of the earlier writers that the Christians entered upon those duties in the same way that others did. One passage, however, in Tertullian,² may be noted as implying the opposite. After speaking of the prevention of factions as a reason why the number of law-tolerated societies is limited, he tries to show that there is no danger of such factions from the Christians, because "there is naught more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state. We acknowledge one all-embracing commonwealth - the world;" or, as Reeve translates the passage, "But for us who are stark cold and dead to all the glories upon earth, what occasion can we have for caballings? And in good truth nothing is further from our soul than the thoughts of mixing in State affairs, or in any private designs, for we look upon purselves as citizens of the world." Considering the context, this may possibly imply that the Christians avoid office, while, with almost equal propriety, it may be interpreted as meaning that the Christians' view of affairs is so broad that they can not be drawn into insignificant factions.

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1. Epistle to Diognetus, Ch. V.
Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XLII.
 2. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXXVIII.

However, a half-century later, Origen's statement is good evidence of the avoidance of state office on the part of the Christians at that time. It may be assumed from a comparison of the Apologists that the tendency to refuse civil office increased as time advanced. Origen replies to Celsus, "But we recognize in each state another national organization, founded by the Word of God, and we exhort those who are mighty and of blameless life to rule over the churches. Those who are ambitious of ruling we reject; but we constrain those who, through excess of modesty, are not easily induced to take a public charge in the Church of God.....And it is not for the sake of escaping public duties, but that they may reserve themselves for a diviner and more necessary service in the Church of God - for the salvation of men." The spirit of Origen is one of loyalty, and his defence for the Christians' attitude

toward office, war, and other state affairs, is that, by

1. Origen against Celsus, Bk. VIII, Ch. LXXV.
2. Ibid., Bk. VIII, Ch. LXXIII. Origen has occasion to reply to Celsus, when the latter urges the Christians "to help the King with all their might, and to labour with him in the maintenance of justice, to fight for him; and if he requires it, to fight under him, or lead an army along with him." The reply is, "The Christians obey the injunction of the apostle, 'I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplication, prayers, intercession, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority.' And as we by our prayers vanquish all demons who stir up war and lead to the violation of oaths and disturb the peace, we in this way are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the fields to fight for them. And we do take our part in public affairs, when, along with righteous prayers, we join self-denying exercises and meditations, which lead us to despise pleasures and not to be led away by them. And none fight better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him,

their chosen life, they really serve the nation better than they could in the usual way.

One of the strongholds of the Apologists' arguments as to their usefulness to the nation is their unwavering¹ faith in the efficacy of their prayers. Origen¹
PRAYER entrenches himself behind the bulwarks of this fortress when he deals with the question of war. "We do not indeed fight under him, although he requires it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army - an army of piety - by offering our prayers to God."

The other writers use much the same arguments. Athen-¹agoras thinks the services rendered by prayer are sufficient to merit for the Christians the granting of their demands.² Tertullian replies to the implication that these

although he require it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army - an army of piety - by offering our prayers to God."

1. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. XXXII. "We are deserving to obtain what we ask, for we pray for your government, that you may, as is most equitable, receive the kingdom, son from father, and that your empire may receive increase and addition, all men becoming subject to your sway."

2. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXX. Also Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXXI. "Thank you for your mistake, for you give us the opportunity of proving our obligations. Do you, then, who think that we care nothing for the welfare of Caesar, look into God's revelations, examine our sacred books, which we do not keep in hiding, and which many accidents put into the hands of those who are not of us. Learn from them that a large benevolence is enjoined upon us, even so far as to supplicate God for our enemies, and to beseech blessings on our persecutors. Who, then, are greater enemies and persecutors of Christians, than the very parties with treasons against whom we are charged? Nay, even in terms, and most clearly, the Scripture says, 'Pray for kings, and rulers, and powers, that all may be peace with you.'"

prayers are intended only to flatter the Emperor and thus by gaining favor to ward off persecution. His appeal is to the sacred writings of the Christians as evidence that they teach the duty of prayer for enemies.

¹
The claim is made that the permanence of the Roman Empire is aided by these prayers, and that some catastrophe of world-wide importance is being averted by the continuance of the Empire. The rather surprising statement is made ² that the Christians have more claim to the Emperor than have the Romans in that he is appointed by the true God, and that the Christians serve the Emperors best in that their prayers are effective. A claim which reveals much of the superstition of the time is that regarding the protection from demons afforded by the Christian prayers. ³

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXXII. "A mighty shock is impending over the whole earth - in fact, the very end of all things threatening dreadful woes - is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman Empire."

2. Ibid., Ch. XXXIII. "But why dwell longer on the reverence and sacred respect of Christians to the emperor whom we cannot but look up to as called by our Lord to his office?.....On valid grounds, I might say Caesar is more ours than yours, for our God has appointed him. Therefore, as having this property in him, I do more than you for his welfare, not merely because I ask it of Him who can give it, or because I ask it as one who deserves to get it, but also because, in keeping His majesty of Caesar within limits, and putting it under the Most High, and making it less than divine, I commend him the more to the favour of Deity, to whom I make him alone inferior."

3. Ibid., Ch. XLIII. "And yet, whatever loss your interests suffer from the religion we profess, the protection you have from us makes amply up for it. What value do you set, I do not here urge, who deliver you from demons, who for your sakes present prayers before the throne of the true God, for perhaps you have no belief in that-but from whom you can have nothing to fear?" Also Ibid., Ch. XXXVII.

Lactantius, too,¹ makes reference to the loyal supplications of his people. "We supplicate the Deity with daily prayers, that He may especially guard thee whom He has wished to be the guardian of the world; that He may inspire thee with a disposition by which thou mayest always continue in the love of the divine name. For this is serviceable to all, both to thee for happiness, and to others for repose."

The Apologists often refer to the general value of the Christians because of the strength and purity of their lives and example. Justin speaks of them as²

MORALITY

more truly the helpers and allies of the Roman government than other men. His idea is that a belief in an all-seeing and righteous God, and everlasting punishment or salvation according to life and its deeds, is a powerful incentive to righteous living, and that righteous living tends toward successful government. He maintains that if these beliefs were more prevalent, fewer infractions of law would occur. A hundred and fifty years later,³ the same claim is put forth. If all men accepted Christian teachings, there would be need for fewer laws; and no need of "prisons, or the swords of rulers, or the terror of punishments, since the wholesomeness of the divine pre-

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1. Lactantius, Divine Institute, Bk. VII, Ch. XXVI.
 2. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. XII.
 3. Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Bk. V, Ch. VIII.

cepts infused into the breasts of men would of itself instruct them to works of justice."

¹
Tertullian bears his witness to the purity of life of the Christians. There are no Christians as criminals in the prisons, for a real Christian who becomes a criminal ceases to merit the name. The conclusion is reached,²
"We then are without crime alone." The Christian beliefs which guard the thought as well as the act must lead to greater purity of life than the authority of human laws, which man may evade or despise. When Christians are condemned,³ that which is useful is scorned."

⁴
Athenagoras, after making the assertion that the Christians are of all men most piously and righteously disposed toward the Deity and toward the government,"⁵
closes his Plea with the statement that he has proven the Christians "pious and gentle and temperate in spirit."

⁶
Origen offers the same plea for his people. "Christians are benefactors of their country more than others,

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XLIV. "You find no Christian there (in prison) as such; or if one is there as something else, a Christian he is no longer."

2. Ibid., Ch. XLV. "We alone make real efforts to attain a blameless life under the influence of our ample knowledge, the impossibility of concealment, and the greatness of threatened torment not merely long-enduring but everlasting, fearing Him, whom he too should fear who the fearing judges,- even God, I mean, not the pro-consul."

3. Ibid., Ch. XLIX.

4. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. I.

5. Ibid., Ch. XXXVII. "Now do you, who are entirely in every thing, by nature and by education, upright, and moderate, and benevolent, and worthy of your rule, now that I have disposed of the several accusations, and proved that we are pious, and gentle, and temperate in spirit, bend your royal

for they train up citizens, and inculcate piety to the Supreme Being; and they promote those whose lives in the smallest cities have been good and worthy, to a divine and heavenly city."

Perhaps one of the most effective points in all the discussion of the Apologists is the willingness expressed

WILLINGNESS
TO BE
EXAMINED

to have their lives and those of their as-
sociates closely examined. Justin voices

this sentiment most clearly, and Tatian¹ says boldly, "I do not conceal from the rulers that view of God which I hold in relation to His government of the universe." Athenag-
²oras³ reinforces Justin's sentiments. "If, indeed, anyone can convict us of a crime, be it small or great, we do not ask to be excused from punishment, but are prepared to undergo the sharpest and most merciless inflictions."

A strong point is made by Tertullian⁴ when he speaks of the fact that the Christians, though strong, have re-

REFRAINING
FROM
REBELLION.

frained from rebellion. After referring to the command to love enemies, and to the many wrongs inflicted upon the Christians, he says, "Banded together as we are, ever so ready to sacrifice our lives, what single case of revenge for injury can you point to, though, if it were held right among us to repay evil

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1. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. III.
 2. Tatian, Address to the Greeks, Ch. XXVII.
 3. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. II.
 4. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXXVII.

for evil, a single night with a torch or two could achieve an ample vengeance? But away with the idea of a sect divine avenging itself by human fires, or shrinking from the sufferings in which it is tried. If we desired, indeed, to act the part of open enemies, not merely of secret avengers, would there be any lacking in strength, whether of numbers or resources?....We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you - cities, islands, fortresses, towns, market-places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum, - we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods. For what should we not be fit, not eager, even with unequal forces, we who so willingly yield ourselves to the sword, if in our religion it were not counted better to be slain than to slay?"

After picturing a possible withdrawal of the Christians, he says, "Why, you would be horror-struck at the solitude in which you would find yourselves, at such an all-pervading silence, and that stupor as of a dead world. You would have to seek subjects to govern. You would have more enemies than citizens remaining. For now it is the immense number of Christians which makes your enemies so few,- almost all the inhabitants of your various cities being followers of Christ.... Yet you choose to call us enemies of the human race, rather than of human error. Nay, who would deliver you from these secret foes, ever

busy destroying your souls and ruining your health? Who would save you, I mean, from the attacks of those spirits of evil, which, without reward or hire we exorcise? This alone would be revenge enough for us, that you were henceforth left free to the possession of unclean spirits. But instead of taking into account what is due to us for the important protection we offer you, and though we are not merely no trouble to you, but, in fact, necessary to your well-being, you prefer to hold us enemies, as indeed we are, yet not of man, but rather of his error."

CHAPTER V.

THE PERSECUTIONS.

Perhaps nothing is more characteristic of the spirit of the times than the expressions of the Apologists regarding the persecutions. This topic, without doubt, is the one most constantly in the minds of the early Christian Fathers, for, from Aristides to Lactantius, we find it a point at issue. The expressions, on the whole, become bolder as time advances.

¹
Aristides barely refers to the persecutions by the Greeks, and does not seem to lay any responsibility upon the Roman rulers. He speaks of the compassion which the Christians have for the Greeks because of their ignorance, and protests that the Christians are good and just. The same ideas appear in the Epistle to Diognetus,² "The Christians are evil spoken of and yet are justified;...they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers.....They are assailed by the Jews as foreigners and are persecuted by the Greeks;

1. Aristides, Apol., Syriac Version, Ch. XVII. "But the Christians are just and good, and the truth is set before their eyes, and their spirit is long-suffering; and therefore, though they know the error of the Greeks, and are persecuted by them, they bear and endure it; for the most part they have compassion on them, as men who are destitute of knowledge."

2. Epistle to Diognetus, Ch. V.

yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred." The exposure to wild beasts does not drive them to deny their Lord, but they rejoice as though receiving new life.

Justin's attitude toward the persecutions has been largely set forth under other topics. He ¹ speaks of the absolute lack of fear of death on the part of the Christians and remarks that those who set them free from their sufferings become really their benefactors. There is no ² fear of the consequences of plain speaking in the words, "But you seem to fear lest all men become righteous, and you no longer have any to punish. Such would be the concern of public executioners, but not of good princes."

No reference as to the feeling regarding the persecutions aside from a desire for their investigation is seen in the Fragments of Melito, but ³ Eusebius quotes him as referring to new edicts according to which Christians are to be pursued. Melito indignantly pronounces these regulations as unprecedented.

⁴
In Tertullian's first chapter the key-note of the conduct of the Christians is struck. "The only shame or regret which the Christian feels is at not having been a Christian earlier. If he is pointed out, he glories in

1. Justin Martyr, First Apol., Ch. LVII.

2. Ibid., Ch. XII.

3. Ramsay, Church in Roman Empire, p. 336.

4. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. I.

Ibid., Ch. XLVI. "The Christian, even when he is condemned, gives thanks."

it; if he is accused, he offers no defence; interrogated, he makes voluntary confession; condemned, he renders thanks." ¹ Later the opinion is expressed that the bad Emperors, as Nero and Domitian, had persecuted the Christians while such a worthy ruler as Aurelius was their protector. Reference is made to the purported letter of Aurelius to the Senate, testifying that the drought in Germany was relieved by the prayers of the Christians. The statement is made that Aurelius did not remove the public disabilities of the Christians, but yet in a measure set them aside and even gave a sentence of condemnation for their accusers, all of which meets with Tertullian's ap-
²proval. He endeavors to set the persecutions in a peculiar light when he advances the argument that the acts which are used against the Christians are the same which are employed in forming the images of the gods, and therefore the martyrs are really deified. "You put Christians on crosses and stakes; you tear the sides of Christians with your claws; we lay our heads on the block, we are cast to wild beasts, we are burned in the flames, we are condemned to the mines, we are banished to islands. If it is in this way a deity is made, it will follow that as many as are punished are deified, and tortures will have to be declared divinities."

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. V.

2. Ibid., Ch. XII.

The fearlessness of the Christians is shown by the testimony, that, under torture, they proclaim, "We worship God through Christ." ¹ The final note of triumph ² in Tertullian's message sounds in the words, "As the divine and human are ever opposed to each other, when we are condemned by you, we are acquitted by the Highest."

A vivid picture of the sufferings of the martyrs is ³ drawn by Minucius Felix, who argues that reason and God must sustain those who so bravely encounter such suffering. ⁴ Origen's contribution to this topic is found in the

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XX.

2. Ibid., ch. I.

3. Minucius Felix, Octavius, Ch. XXXVII. "How beautiful is the spectacle to God when a Christian does battle with pain; when he is drawn up against threats, and punishments, and tortures; when, mocking the noise of death, he treads under foot the horror of the executioner; when he raises up his liberty against kings and princes, and yields to God alone, whose he is; when, triumphant and victorious, he tramples upon the very man who has pronounced sentence against him! Boys and young women among us treat with contempt crosses and torture, with beasts and all the bugbears of punishment, with the inspired patience of suffering. And do you not perceive, O wretched man, that there is nobody who is willing without reason to undergo punishment, or is able without God to bear tortures?"

4. Origen against Celsus, Bk. III, Ch. VIII. "But with regard to the Christians, because they were taught not to avenge themselves upon their enemies; and because they would not, although able, have made war even though they had received authority to do so,- they have obtained this reward from God, that He has always warred on their behalf, and on certain occasions has restrained those who rose up against them and desired to destroy them. For in order to remind others, that by seeing a few engaged in a struggle for their religion, they also might be better fitted to despise death some, on special occasions, and these individuals can easily be numbered, have endured death for the sake of Christianity,- God not permitting the whole nation to be exterminated, but desiring that it should continue, and that the whole world should be filled

suggestion that God himself has restrained and tempered the persecutions so that His children might not suffer too severely or be exterminated.

¹
Fifty years after Origen we have the plea, "Are Christians to be forced by flames, banishment, slaughter, and any other kind of punishments and by fear of cruel torture, to worship or even to know about the obscenities of the gods?" A little later still, in the time of Constantine, Lactantius devotes more space to the subject of the persecutions than do any of the other Apologists.

While he seems to recognize that the Emperor is in some way more favorable to the Christians, at the same time he evidently does not feel that the danger of persecution is over. The picture of what he had witnessed under Diocletian ² is most vivid. Cicero (Republic, III, XVII, 27) is ³

with the salutary and religious doctrine. And again on the other hand, that those who were of weaker minds might recover their courage, and rise superior to the thought of death, God interposed His providence on behalf of believers, dispersing by an act of His will alone all the conspiracies formed against them; so that neither kings nor rulers, nor the populace, might be able to rage against them beyond a certain point."

1. . Arnobius, Bk. V, Ch. XXIX.

2. Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Bk. I, Ch. I; Bk. VII, Ch. XXVI.

3. Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. XI. "Therefore they harass and torment them with studied kinds of punishments and think it little to kill those whom they hate, unless cruelty also mocks their bodies. But if any, through fear of pain or death, or by their own perfidy, have deserted the heavenly oath and have consented to deadly sacrifices, these they praise and load with honours, that by their example, they may allure others. But upon those who have highly esteemed their faith, and have not denied that they are worshippers of God, they fall with all the strength of their butchery, as though they thirsted for blood; and they call them des-

¹
quoted to the effect that "the wise man would prefer to be bad with a good reputation than to be good with a bad reputation." Lactantius thinks this attitude altogether wrong, and writes, "Why should they rage with such cruelty, unless it is that they fear lest, as justice grows strong from day to day, they should be deserted together with their decaying gods?" The ideal of true bravery which Lactantius presents is to be found in his pictures of the martyrs.
²

"Behold, the weak sex and fragile age endure to be lacerated in the whole body and to be burned; not of necessity, for it is permitted them to escape if they wished to do so; but of their own will, because they put their trust in God." The bravery and

perate, because they by no means spare their body; as though anything could be more desperate than to torture and tear in pieces him whom you know to be innocent.

Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. XI. "No one can befittingly describe the cruelty of the beast which reclines in one place, and yet rages with iron teeth throughout the world, and not only tears in pieces the limbs of men, but also breaks their very bones, and rages over their ashes, that there may be no place for their burial, as though they who profess God aimed at this, that their tombs should be visited, and not rather that they themselves may reach the presence of God."

1. Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Bk. V, Ch. XII.

2. Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. XIII.

¹
patience of the Christians is that of those who "refuse no tortures, no kind of death that they may not turn aside from faith and justice; who do not tremble at the commands of tyrants nor the swords of rulers."

"To choose to be tortured and slain rather than to take incense in three fingers, and throw it upon the hearth, appears foolish,"² but Lactantius holds that the worship of any other object than God by even so simple a ceremony is a great impiety.

³
More than once Lactantius and others emphasize the fact that the persecutions increase the number of the Christians. They say with Tertullian, "The blood of Christians is seed."

1. Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Bk. V, Ch. XIV. See also Bk. VI, Ch. XVII, "No one doubts but that it is the part of a timid and feeble mind either to fear pain, or want, or exile, or imprisonment, or death; and if anyone does not dread all these, he is judged a man of the greatest fortitude. But he who fears God is free from the fear of all these things. In proof of which, there is no need of arguments, for the punishments inflicted on the worshippers of God have been witnessed at all times, and are still witnessed through the world, in the tormenting of whom new and unusual tortures have been devised.... This virtue (of patience) afforded the greatest astonishment to all people and provinces and to the tortures themselves, when cruelty was overcome by patience."

2. Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. XIX.

3. Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. XXIII, XXIII. Also Epistle of Diognetus, Ch. V; Tertullian, Apology, Ch. I. "The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in numbers we grow; the blood of Christians is seed."

There are perhaps few bolder passages than some to be found in Lactantius. He is strongest when he speaks most fearlessly.¹ "Therefore, let those who destroy their own souls and the souls of others learn what an inexpressible crime they commit; in the first place, because they cause their own death by serving most abandoned demons, whom God has condemned to everlasting punishments; in the next place, because they do not permit God to be worshipped by others, but endeavor to turn men aside to deadly rites, and strive with the greatest diligence that no life may be without injury on earth, which looks to heaven with its condition secured.

The climax of Lactantius' boldness comes when he prophesies the visitation of the wrath of God upon the persecutors.² "Whatever, therefore, wicked princes plan against us, God Himself permits to be done. And yet, most unjust persecutors, to whom the name of God was subject to reproach and mockery, must not think that they will escape with impunity, because they have been, as it were, the ministers of His indignation against us. For they will be punished with the judgment of God, who, having received

1. Lactantius, Bk. V, Ch. XX.

2. Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. XXIV. Ibid., Bk. VII, Ch. XVI. "Nevertheless the Sybils openly say that Rome is doomed to perish, and that indeed by the judgment of God, because it held His name in hatred; and being the enemy of righteousness it destroyed the people who kept the truth."

Ibid., Bk. VII, Ch. XVII, XXIV, XV. Description of how the destruction of Rome is to come to pass.

power, have abused it in an inhuman degree, and have even insulted God in their arrogance and placed His eternal name beneath their feet, to be impiously and wickedly trampled upon....Only let us labour, that nothing else in us may be punished by men but righteousness only; let us strive with all our might that we may at once deserve at the hands of God the avenging of our suffering and a reward."

The general attitude of the Apologists toward the persecutions embodies a protest and at the same time they almost glory in the suffering and bravery of their companions in the faith. There seems to be nothing to indicate that the Christians avoid punishment, either by denial or hiding. However, Tertullian makes a statement which shows that suffering is not desired for itself, but only as war is desired by a soldier. "Yet the man who objected to the conflict, both fights with all his strength, and, when victorious, he rejoices in the battle, because he reaps from it glory and spoil. It is our battle to be summoned to your tribunal, that there, under fire of execution, we may battle for the truth. But the day is won when the object of the struggle is gained. This victory of ours gives us the glory of pleasing God, and the spoil of life eternal. But we are overcome. Yes, when we have

1. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. L.

obtained our wishes. Therefore, we conquer in dying; we go forth victorious at the very time we are subdued."

CHAPTER VI.

THEORIES OF GOVERNMENT.

Very fragmentary theories of government may be drawn¹ from the Apologists. Tatian desires uniformity of legislation. "There ought to be one common polity for all; but now there are as many different codes as there are states, so that things held disgraceful in one are honorable in others." Athenagoras,² on the other hand, speaks with approval of the fact that in the Empire different nations have different customs and laws; and no one is hindered by law or fear of punishment from following his ancestral usages, however ridiculous they may be.

In the course of arguments intended to detract from³ the authority of the Roman gods, both Tertullian and Minucius Felix⁴ show that the greatness and power of Rome could not have arisen from loyalty to the heathen deities. The latter, especially, argues that the Romans owe their power not to their religious devotion, but to the fact that they were sacreligious with impunity.

⁵
In the time of Constantine, Lactantius writes in such a way that he may be interpreted as referring with disapproval to the division of the Empire. He is endeavoring

-
1. Tatian, Address to the Greeks, Ch. XXVIII.
 2. Athenagoras, Embassy, Ch. I.
 3. Tertullian, Apol., Ch. XXV.
 4. Minucius Felix, Octavius, Ch. XXV.

to show that the division of power among gods weakens the authority of each, and his illustration is taken from the world of government. "Who can doubt that he would be a most powerful king who should have the government of the whole world? And not without reason, since all things which everywhere exist would belong to him, since all resources from all quarters would be centered in him alone. But if more than one divide the government of the world, undoubtedly each will have less power and strength since everyone must confine himself within his prescribed portion."

Contrary to the once generally accepted belief, we are forced by the evidence of the Apologists to the conclusion that the Christian influence was not intentionally inimical to the Roman government, and that when, as in the third century, the Christians refrained from participation in affairs of state, it was that they might perform what seemed to them a greater service. It is true, that the Apologists can not give absolutely impartial evidence because of their position as defenders of the faith, and yet the sincerity with which they speak is convincing as to the honesty of their purposes and of the purposes of those whom they represent. The reader is particularly impressed by the loyalty and

CONCLUSION

humility of the writings contrasted with vigorous protestations against injustice, withering sarcasm, and absolute lack of fear.

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A P P R O V E D: _____

Professor of European History.

Recommended for special honors:

*Charles Horster Smith,
George Lawrence Fiske
Lisa Currier Tilton* } *Committee*

TYPEWRITTEN BY
TILLIE L. SNYDER,
Room 4,
Over 1st Nat. B'k

89086017456



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